1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR3 Bush Negroes SR3
Saramacca

kunu, which must kill his children. Was it safe to mention it? A chance question was asked.

"Nothing will happen to my children, Bak'a. They will belong to my wife's family. It is my sister's children that things will happen to."

Bayo paused for a moment on the path, and stood in thought. Was it that he wished to be entirely honest with his friend? Was it that to confess the truth was too difficult for him? Whatever the reason, his next remark indicated a compromise.

"Nothing will happen to my children. Those of my younger brother will die, but not mine."

The conversation came back to the less painful subject of betrothal. Whatever the reason for accepting this boy whose kunu brought such supernatural risk, the match had apparently been satisfactory to the family of the girl, and they had sent word that the marriage would not displease them.

"Now I am earning the money I need, and later I will make the things I must give my girl and her family."

There was, first of all, the work to be done for Bayo's prospective mother-in-law. He might have to help her with repairs on her house, or assist her in clearing a field. Before he was married he would have to go into the bush and cut the two fields for his wife, one for rice and one for cassava, which a married woman must have, and in addition he would have to cut an extra field for the mother of his wife.

"I must do it so they can be sure that I am strong, and can take care of their girl when I marry her. But I will not have any trouble!"

Before that, however, Bayo would have to see to the carvings which a man had to have for marrying.

"I do not like to carve. But I have friends who will carve for me while I go hunting for them!" That was the way to solve such difficulties. When the carvings were assembled he would have to make a boat for his girl. Bayo was not yet certain, but he thought that another boat would have to be made for his mother-in-law. Then

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

Marriage requires a bride price, consisting of pieces of cloth, sugar, tobacco, and some carved wooden implements, such as combs, paddles, trays. These are handed over to the bride's family as presents. Then the wife simply moves into her husband's hut, or he into hers. Despite their pre-marital promiscuity, it is said that on the bridal night all the inhabitants of a Bush Negro village will gather outside the hut to hear what the husband has to say regarding the bride's virginity. If the girl is not a virgin, part of the bride price may be refunded, at the husband's discretion. The gathering on such an occasion is attended by much jocularity.

The Djuka husband builds a hut for each one of his women and has another for himself, to which he may retire whenever he feels the need of bachelor seclusion. The woman sleeps in her own hut, cooks, and raises her children there. The husband comes to her when he wants to, and leaves her for another wife when impulse so guides him. She seldom quarrels with the other wives, who may even live in separate villages.

Each wife has her own provision ground, where she grows rice and cassava; her husband has cleared it for her. The cassava fields are owned by individual women, but are held in very loose tenure. At harvest time, or when a plague of insects is threatening, the women of several households work together in common.

The man's hut is called his *gudu oso*, or "treasure house." It serves to impress his women with his importance and wealth. They are forbidden to enter it, but, woman-like, they insist on peeping in. So he keeps many boxes and wood carv-

/14 cont./

584 and, once this has been promised, she does indeed continue to be regarded specifically as the betrothed of the person who made the request. As soon as she is marriageable, she is handed over to her man with or without her consent, and it may be regarded as a rare case when such a promise is broken.

[431] The man to whom she is promised sometimes does not see his future wife before the occasion of her betrothal, but usually he is concerned with her upbringing and from time to time gives her presents consisting of money, pantjes, and corals.

[591] Some take the girl promised to them even when she is only three or four years old in order to rear her further.

[672] The promising of newborn girls takes place for the most part
[682] when there are obligations between parents, as was reported in Chapter III, and in the case of enslavement which is done to one
[567] family by another in case of poisoning, and so forth.

586 It is an everyday occurrence that a woman leaves her husband or a man his wife for another.

595 Polygyny is much practiced, and among my workers I know several who have three or four wives, most of whom are very young. Some, however, have only one wife.

It is noteworthy that all the wives sleep with the man in one hut, while in addition he perhaps keeps with him a girl whom he
[513] is bringing up to be his wife. One wife will be /15/ with him in the hammock and lies with her feet at the head end of the man and the latter in turn with his feet at the head end of the women, while the other women sleep in their hammocks.

[484] If a Bush Negro goes out, be it to celebrate a festival or in order to float wood to the town, he takes all his wives with him; only in case of illness do they remain behind.

His wives get money separately, and therefore they must also separately provide for his food, so that one cooks the food in the morning, another at midday, a third in the evening, etc.
[578] This way of life and their jealous nature frequently bring about household quarrels that rarely end in any way other than bloody fights.

585 Upon the conclusion of a marriage the man is obligated to
583 give the parents of the girl as a marriage portion a long, broad,

/15 cont./

585 white cotton sleeping blanket, various colored cloths and pantjes,
[583] some earthenware, such as bowls and plates, iron pots and pans, and the like, while he is obligated on the occasion to provide for an ample supply of strong drink and sugar wine.

They do not have festivities, games, or dancing in connection with their marriages.

586 If a marriage is dissolved, then each of the two parties again goes to his own family: in case those concerned in it and the elders disapprove of this, however, it happens that man and wife are forced to continue to live with each other, especially when there are no substantial reasons and grievances.

593 The man is obligated to provide his wife or his wives with food, clothing, and ornaments; she, to follow the man everywhere, to cook for him, to wash, and to take care of the housekeeping.

264 The wives are neat in an exemplary fashion: plates, bowls,
252 and pans are always kept extremely clean, and they also see to it that everything is extremely clean in connection with cooking.

841 If they find themselves in a period of menstruation, they
302 indicate this immediately to the husband by withdrawing from his dwelling and staying in seclusion with other women; they neither cook nor do the least thing for him in this state, do not even come within sight of him, and remain secluded to the end; when they have cleaned and dressed themselves, they decorate their shoulders and arms with white stripes as a token /16/ that they have again
[388] returned to their normal state. The stripes are made by mixing
[824] pounded adroe (1) with ground chalk and water.

1. A tuberous root-stalk from the Cyperus rotundus L.

Sometimes they also smear the forehead and the neck in this way and appear thus before their husbands.

841 During their seclusion another woman, who is a member of
571 the family or possibly a female friend, daily prepares and brings the
252 food, which, however, is at the expense of the secluded wife. They perform this service for each other mutually.

/34 cont./

601 They continue to use the terms soagi, pay, may even after the break-up of a marriage, so that they are in frequent usage. As for the woman herself, they say sa So-and-so in speaking to her, as to a sister.

581 Marriage. The conceptions of the Refugee Blacks on this subject are remarkable. Marriage in the African sense of the term, understood as a contract between two groups of relatives, does not exist among them. The union of the man and woman does not involve any sort of contract between their groups of relatives and consequently entails no matrimonial compensation. /35/ The Refugee Blacks are the only African Negro population to our knowledge whose customs do not involve any form of "dowry" either in money or in kind.

Family life in the sense that we understand it does not exist; as we shall see further on, marriage is forbidden between people of the same lineage, which implies that the husband and wife live in different villages. The man builds a house for his wife in her native village, but he does not come to live with her; he makes visits of several days to her as to his other wives, in the course of which he furnishes her with the imported objects (salt, kerosene, cloth, etc.) she needs, lends her his aid for heavy chores, while, for her part, she turns over to him the products of the clearing. The rest of the time he lives as a bachelor in his mother's village where he builds his own house. If he is very attached to his wife, he can come to reside with her and can even succeed without great difficulty in bringing her to live in his own village; but few couples take advantage of this option, for the man and wife prize their independence above everything else.

The life of the man and of the wife remain entirely separate and their union has more the character of a temporary association founded on material interests than that of a marriage; the family life of each one remains entirely centered around his or her matrilineage.

C:Hurault--53 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Boni

/36 cont./

194
571

Family custom is a thing tenacious in other ways than a language, a technique, indeed a cult. Men cling desperately to the social and matrimonial system they have received, with the feeling that if they abandoned it their familiar universe would crumble. Do we not see nowadays in the big African cities groups completely separated geographically from their tribe of origin, subject sometimes for several generations to European influence, maintain fiercely their matrimonial system? Yet in all the tribes of Refugee Blacks patrilineal filiation prevailed nowhere at all, and patrilocal residence disappeared, it seems, rather rapidly; the problem cannot be dodged by facile explanations such as the influence of slavery or the rarity of women among the rebels (1).

[583]

1. The rebel groups were quickly balanced from a demographic point of view, for they went and carried off women from the plantations.

One must assume that fundamental reasons made the patrilineal groups less viable than the others and finally led to their dissolution. These reasons appear to be of two orders:

—The independent spirit of the African woman, concerned above all with her freedom with respect to the man;

—The moral and religious law under which the unification of the tribes of Refugee Blacks was brought about, implying rejection of any form of violence or oppression. Under this law it could no longer be a question of taking the wife away from her maternal village if she was attached to it, no more than of coercing her to make her live in a union which had ceased to please her.

/36 cont./

1174 671 The formation of patrilineages must have been hampered by numerous divorces; in addition, in case of divorce, the wife unquestionably aspired to take her children with her, not recognizing any contract between the two groups of kin which might be able to affect her free will; one can also be certain that the children, if consulted, must have followed their mother in most cases and [586] joined their maternal kin group. This tendency remains perfectly observable in our day; we shall see all its importance when we study how the children are raised and what tutelage is exercised upon them.

Now there is no patrilineage conceivable if, in case of divorce, the children do not stay with the father. Patrilineal societies exist in which the wife is free, were it only the Peule society, where divorces are very frequent. But African custom has it that in a patrilineal system, by reason of payment of the dowry, the wife's kin lose all rights over the children. They have entered the man's kin group and his ancestral cult.

The formation of matrilineal and patrilocal groupings must also have collided with analogous difficulties, the women not willingly leaving their village of origin.

One can rather easily imagine that in the initial period of the formation of the /37/ new tribes, the different matrimonial systems coexisted; then the patrilocal groups, less viable, progressively broke up, while the present custom was being established.

195 643 This point of view is confirmed by an exact piece of information collected at the end of the 19th century by the explorer Coudreau. Upon the death of Agosu, son of Boni, it was his son Gongo who succeeded him. But after the death of Gongo, the succession went according to the matrilineal system.

• 583 [591] Another important aspect of the matrimonial system of the Refugee Blacks is the absence of any compensation or payment. Even if it happens that a woman leaves her lineage permanently in order to settle in her husband's village and found a family there

/37 cont./

583 591 (this was especially the case with the Afi and Toïna lineages cited above), that does not entail any compensation. It is contrary to custom and disapproved of, but if the wife absolutely insists on leaving her kin she is free to do it. Nothing can be claimed from her husband's lineage.

The usual interpretation of matrimonial compensation, regarded as a mechanism for exchange of women among groups, thus does not seem valid here. If a woman leaves a Boni lineage for good to go and found a family, for example among the Djuka, her descendants are lost to the lineage without any possibility of compensation. Yet this society so deeply rooted in African soil does not make provision for any allowance or payment in such a case.

613 771 [829] Things are clearer if the lineage is considered not as an effective material grouping but as a spiritual community subject to the same religious law. In the thought of the Refugee Blacks, the fundamental religious tie which joins the individual to his ancestors in uterine line cannot be broken whatever anyone does.

[591] [784] Wherever she may go, the emigrant woman remains a member of the spiritual community; she remains, she and her children, subject to the same kunu. Nor can this religious tie be transferred from the maternal kin group.

581 583 Understood thus, marriage breaks no spiritual tie, creates none; it thus affords no reason for any compensation.

000 These considerations show that the African "dowry" as conceived by patrilineal societies is not only a mechanism for the exchange of women among materially constituted groups. It can also have as its end, without those concerned even being aware of it, to compensate the spiritual community of the lineage for the loss of the children the woman will bear, their passage to another cult.

/61/

173 1937 Mission to determine the trijunction point of the frontiers of French Guiana-Brazil-Surinam.

1939 Declaration of war.

1944-45 Not a precise point of reference. The Boni confuse the liberation of the territory with the end of the war.

1948 First I.G.N. mission.

1949 Mr. Aubert de la Rüe's mission; second I.G.N. mission.

1952 Third I.G.N. mission. /blank page/ /63/

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

571 The social institutions of the Refugee Blacks diverge noticeably from those of the African peoples from whom they issued. [561] They do not include age grades, men's societies, or initiation; [575] marriage involves neither a contract between kin groups nor [881] "dowry."

● [583] In a general way these societies founded by rebel slaves who had retained an extreme horror of all oppression were organized 571 so as not to have any material constraint weigh upon the individual. 626 Their institutions are entirely founded on the idea of protection [791] against suprahuman perils; the individual remains perfectly free, and he adheres /to these institutions/ only in proportion as he is [156] conscious of these perils. The custom of the Refugee Blacks, devoid of any means of material coercion, tends to develop within the individual the feeling that he is constantly threatened,

/70 cont./

643 613 In 1957 the Dikan lineage was practically extinct. There remained only Grand Man Difu and his elder brother Samalobi, very old.

[829] The present grand man does not know the genealogy of his lineage beyond his grandmother. /Fig. 14.appears here./ /71/

[648] At the death of Awensay it was Samalobi, eldest of Awensay's classificatory nephews, who was to be named; but the French administration thought they had to oppose it, judging him too old; he yielded with good grace.

613 [165] [554] Samalobi, the ancestor, the patriarch of the Boni, died in May, 1957 at over 100 years old. Although very weakened by his infirmities and nearly blind, he kept great prestige and no important decision was made without his consent.

173 The son of Apatu, companion of Crevaux, he had retained an exact memory of the explorer whom he had accompanied during part of his trip in 1877. It is thanks to his memories that Crevaux's prestige has remained so great on the Maroni.

643 692 578 The grand man judges without appeal disputes between members of different lineages. Truly serious affairs are extremely rare, if one keeps in mind that:

[613] [583] [586] --Disputes over the payment of dowry, paying it back in case of divorce, and the assignment of the children, which form the main part of the cases argued before ordinary African jurisdictions, do not exist among the Refugee Blacks;

643 613

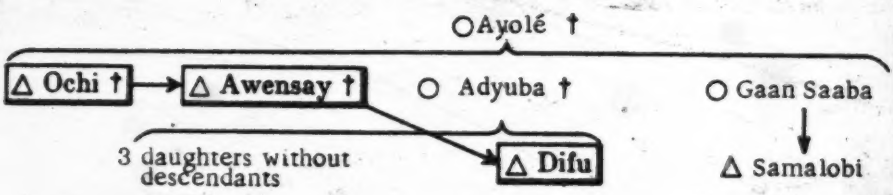

Fig. 14. Filiation of the last three grand men of the Boni.

/133 cont./

866 461 434 made for sale, the guardian gives him a small sum out of the money gained. At 14 an adolescent begins to satisfy nearly all his own needs.

883 465 For example, from June to December, 1956, Tasa (14 years), son of Fintiman (Boniville) had earned about 13,000 francs:

June	helped his father build a large boat for the administration (45 days)	6,000
October	went to Saint-Laurent as auxiliary bossman .	3,000
December	helped convoy a boat of the border-fixing mission sent back empty to Maripasoula . .	4,000
		13,000

882 868 His father, entrusted with his education, let him use this money in his own way; he pointed out to us with pride that for the first time in 1956 his son had been able to satisfy all his own needs, but that it was important to keep him under a firm hand until he was capable of doing a man's work alone: for that, five or six years of apprenticeship would not be too much.

868 561 [153] In fact, many times we had the chance to verify it, it is in this prolonged apprenticeship that are developed the seriousness of mind and the technical skill so remarkable among the Refugee Blacks. At 20 years, most of them still do not know how to do [582] [198] anything worthwhile, and it is scarcely before 25 or 27 that they become capable of /134/ painstaking work; in this respect the present tendency of the young boys toward precocious emancipation (the marriage age of men is going down to 20 and even 18 years) runs the risk of having very unfortunate consequences for the future of the Refugee Blacks.

429 [582] [583] The person charged with the education of a girl exercises the powers of a mother toward her. It is she who authorizes her to marry, and by giving her the pāŋgi, married women's garment, gives her symbolically her freedom as a woman. It is to her that the first husband pays the price of the virginity of the girl.

/143 cont./

585 613 The head of the lineage calls a classificatory sister of the girl. He takes her by the hand and leads her to the suitor's envoy, saying: "I give thee this woman."

Then he calls a classificatory brother of the girl. He leads him to the suitor's envoy, saying: "I give thee this man."

This second part of the ceremony is purely symbolic; there is no question at all that this man and this woman are marrying. Its purpose seems to be to show the perfect equality of the man and the woman in the marriage.

[769] The words pronounced in the invocation to the ancestors are: "We give (this) woman to (this) man; may they live together, may they not be sick, may they have children, children who live."

[584] There is no need for the assent of the woman's father.

585 If it is a question of the first marriage of a young girl, [583] the fiancé comes, aided by his friends, to build her a house. He builds her a boat and buys for her what is necessary for [429] domestic life. When the person who is bringing up the girl judges the time to be ripe, she gives her the pāŋgi, garment of married women, authorizing thus the consummation of the marriage.

[613] The husband who built the house asks the elders of his [769] wife's lineage to come in front of the house to throw tafia, to ask the ancestors that the couple be fecund and live a long time in this house.

584 613 Here, for example, is how the marriage proposal to Chitaïna (Aw.B.1, F43, Asisi village) by Déési (L1, F45, Loka village) proceeded in 1948.

To represent him Déési had sent his classificatory brother Tamu /144/ (L1, F32), older than he by about 15 years, and his classificatory aunt, Yaana (L1, E39). (See the genealogical table of the Lapé lineage.)

/147 cont./

583 A girl's marriage does not involve any dowry in the African sense of the term, but it involves payment of the price of virginity to the mother. This payment is made after consummation of the marriage (or after defloration if there has been a clandestine union). It consists of seven pieces of cloth, a demijohn of tafia, and various imported objects (the whole representing in 1958 about 8,000 francs, which is relatively small for the Refugee Blacks). It really has to do with the price of virginity, for nothing is paid back if there is a break-up. The man moreover gives the girl white beads /possibly "pearls" --Tr./, red cloth, and sweetmeats which constitute the payment of her akka.

[429] The price of virginity is paid to the person who has raised the girl, even if it is a man. This person divides it equally with the mother or, if the latter is dead, with the mother's sisters.

For example, for O Baïkom (D,u, F10), brought up by her father Malobi in Loka village, her husband Moomu (Kotika) paid the price of virginity to Malobi who shared it with his wife Béniti.

[604] [613] No payment is made to the uncles or to the head of the lineage.

836 [597] The fact that a girl may carry on a clandestine affair and be deflowered without having been properly proposed to is considered a shame for the mother; but if the seducer confesses and pays the price of virginity, honor is restored.

Defloration does not necessarily entail marriage, for the seducer does not always intend to take on the maintenance of a household.

If the girl is deflowered too young, her mother does not give her the pāŋgi and continues to forbid her to have sexual relations, for she fears that she may become pregnant. Now for 848 558 a girl, becoming pregnant without having concluded a contract of maintenance with a man is an extreme shame, for that means she is not worth anything.

/148 cont./

836
684
[558] daughter's virginity: the other women will make fun of her and as for the men, they will be unanimous in laughing cruelly at the new trick played on the women. Now certain girls refuse obstinately to confess, or they have already had several adventures, so that nobody succeeds in knowing the truth. After many recriminations and arguments the affair proceeds no further.

If it has been possible to identify the seducer with certainty, the mother, arming herself with a stick, goes from village to village to find him; his uncles intervene and end by settling the business by asking the mother to accept, since there is nothing else to do, the payment for virginity. This sum absolutely must be paid; if the young man were not able to do it, his uncles would pay it for him even if they have to turn against him ultimately. The mother accepts the payment, honor is safe.

• 583 In many cases the couple consider themselves as joined, at least temporarily; the man prepares, if he is hard working, to build a house for his wife. If he is not hard working, he simply promises to make one for her some day; in reality he has spared himself this great labor; the woman will have to wait for years unless her mother or one of her uncles dies, bequeathing her his or her house. /149/

836
684 Observation in Boniville in October, 1956:

A village woman comes to complain to Fintiman that his nephew and ward Doni has deflowered her daughter Elina, 15 years old, in July of the same year. She learned it indirectly, and the daughter expressly confessed it. Doni admitted the facts; he promised to pay the indemnity at the end of the border-fixing mission when he has received his pay. Elina continues to wear the kwey until further orders and does not show any embarrassment. Doni comes back in the evening. I hear Fintiman reprimand him, but only for form's sake: "Deflowering a girl when one does not intend to live with her is something which is

/217 cont./

If someone marries a girl, he must not only pay her mother the price of virginity but must also pay the girl's akka. For that he offers white beads and cloth which the bride will wear, as well as sweets which will be consumed by her. If the price of virginity were not paid, the woman's akka, humiliated, might make her sick or kill her. /218/

/218/ There are seven categories of akka, masculine and feminine, one for each day of the week.

Crevaux in 1877 was able to establish the complete list(1):

1. This conception is widespread in the Agni-Ashanti culture area, among the Ewé and Mina, and as far as western Dahomey. The names reported among the Mina correspond very exactly, except for some differences in pronunciation, to the ones kept by the Boni.

	Men	Women
Sunday	Kwasi	Kwasiba
Monday	Kɔdyo	Adyuba
Tuesday	Kwami	Abeniba
Wednesday	Kwaku	Akuba
Thursday	Yao	Yaba
Friday	Kɔfi	Afiba
Saturday	Kwamina	Amba

All these names are known to the Boni, but none of our informants was capable of reciting the complete list. It is well understood that a name like Kɔfi, Kɔdio /sic/, etc. is the akka's name and not at all the man's name (2).